

**Administrator Visits Houston, Texas
March 6, 2014**

Issue: Libby Asbestos Contaminated Vermiculite Exfoliation Sites

Background/Status: The W.R. Grace owned and operated the Zonolite Mine, located in Libby, Montana. Vermiculite ore was mined for commercial purposes from the 1920's through 1990. Vermiculite, a naturally occurring fibrous mineral, has been used in lawn, garden, agricultural, and horticultural products; thermal and sound insulation; and construction, insulation, and lightweight packing material. Vermiculite from the Libby mine was contaminated with tremolite-actinolite, a particularly hazardous form of naturally occurring asbestos. Exposure to asbestos is strongly associated with malignant and nonmalignant respiratory diseases, including asbestosis and mesothelioma. Contaminated Libby vermiculite was shipped to exfoliation facilities in numerous locations throughout the United States, and reportedly to three facilities in Houston, TX. EPA has initiated assessment activities at the Vermiculite Products Site, the Isolatek Industries Site and the Tri-Lite ALmeda Site. EPA's assessment will include offsite assessment at neighboring residential and commercial properties.

Message:

- EPA's Removal Program will conduct site assessment activities at all three sites. These assessments will include both soil sampling and activity-based air sampling (ABS).
- EPA conducted an emergency removal action at the Vermiculite Products Site to address Libby amphibole asbestos contamination at a property slated for residential redevelopment. The contamination was identified when EPA took soil samples of soil piles created as a result of soil disturbing redevelopment activities. EPA will initiate ABS once emergency removal activities are complete.

Contacts:

Carl Edlund, Superfund Division Director (214) 665-6701
Connie Suttice, Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs (214) 665-7345